INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT Lead Mining and Metal Poisoning at Leninogorsk

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

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[redacted]

1. Leninogorsk was formerly known as Ridder, and had been named after an English miner who had developed the gold mines in the surrounding mountains. At the time [redacted] there were no English inhabitants of the city, and the only exploitation of the mines was for lead.

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2. The city was located at the end of a railroad line from Ust Kamenogorsk, which was further linked by rail to Semipalatinsk, Barnaul, and Novosibirsk. The Soviet inhabitants numbered about 5,000, most of whom were prisoners, sentenced to work in the region for a definite number of years. Many of these exiles were married and a school was available for their children's education. The lead mine was practically the only source of employment, other than construction jobs for the civilians.

3. The German PWs and the Soviet civilians were used to exploit the lead content of the mines in the surrounding mountains. The work was divided into four general steps: (a) removal of ore from the shafts; (b) crushing of the ore; (c) roasting of the ore to obtain crude lead; (d) refining of the crude lead. The ore was removed from shaft mines and brought to the lead refinery, which was located about 4 kilometers outside the center of the town. The mines and refinery were served by a branch of the railroad line steaming from its last passenger stop at the Leninogorsk railroad station.

4. The Soviet workers in the mine shafts were continually affected by silicosis. No protection from dust was afforded them, or the Germans. The Soviets had worked longer than the Germans at the mines and the incidence of silicosis was very high among them as compared to the Germans. No figures could be given.

5. Roasting of the ore took place at open ovens and seemed to obtain the crude lead from the crushed ore by melting. Workers here were subject to inhalation of dust and of lead-laden dust particles. No protection was afforded either the PWs or the Soviets. The latter were generally used as foremen. Noticeable symptoms of lead poisoning which developed here were gastric and intestinal

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inflammation, blackening of the gums and loosening of the teeth. Workers were not removed from this job until gum blackening was in an advanced state. Rotation of workers on this job was staggered because the workers were considered to be "specialists" whose skills could not be replaced by a completely new and untrained crew. This system of staggering forced many men to remain unduly long at the hazardous work. The effects of such labor differed in individuals. Some were affected by the work after a period of six months' labor; others showed no effects after four years at the roasting section.

6 Prisoners who were considered too ill to continue work in the roasting section were sent to the German PW camp hospital, where they remained for about one month. Here they received "good food", including milk. It was not known whether they received other treatment. [redacted] 25X1
the possibility that the men received calcium injections, or other thera- 25X1
peutic agents. [redacted] considered this highly unlikely because of the great shortage of medical supplies in the camp hospital. The PWs, after their month in the hospital, were allowed to remain at the PW camp for another month and were then sent to work at the relatively safe mining operations.

25X1 7. [redacted] refining of the crude lead was performed by melting the crude lead in open metal vats, 3 m in diameter and 1.5 m deep, which were set in brick-lined furnaces. The vats were heated at the bottom by coal (or coke) fires. The crude lead was melted, and admixtures, principally zinc blocks, were added to combine with the non-lead portion of the crude melt. The mixture was stirred by a mechanical agitator. The impurities floated to the top of the liquid mass, and were removed by flat, grid-like plates which skimmed the material from the surface. This operation was repeated several times to increase the purity of the lead. The purified lead was then pumped up from the vat into brick-lined sluices which led to molds. The uncrated solidified lead was then shipped by rail to places unknown.

8. The PWs and civilians who worked in the lead refinery had no protection other than gloves and caps. These workers were subject to fumes of lead and zinc, and many of these men were affected by a "zinc fever". This was manifested, apparently, only by high fever and loss of appetite. The sick PWs were sent to the camp hospital, where they remained for only two days, receiving milk and the hospital diet. The temperature usually subsided in two days, and the men were confined to the camp grounds for two more days, after which time they were sent to work in the underground mines. No mortality figures could be given, although apparently some of the PWs died.

9. Milk was apparently available only in the camp hospital, and did not form a part of the regular PW fare.

10. The main section of Leninogorsk consisted of stone houses, remaining since the time of the gold-mining days. This section was located about 1 km east of the railroad station. The PW camp was in this section in stone barracks; the PW hospital was in the same fenced-in compound with the barracks. It had about 50 beds. About 3 km to the northeast, along an unnamed, unpaved main street, was the lead refinery. This road crossed two wooden bridges over two small brooks, on the way from town to the refinery.

11 A civilian hospital was located next to the refinery. It was a two-story wooden building, 25 m x 35 m. Here were treated accident cases, which were frequent among the Soviet civilian workers. The hospital also had an X-ray instrument. No further details concerning this hospital could be obtained. It was the only hospital for civilians in Leninogorsk except a house where venereal disease cases were treated. Source believed that mortality among the Soviet workers in the mines and refinery was high, but could give no figures.

25X1 12. [redacted] two thousand PWs contracted diphtheria in the autumn of 1945. The camp hospital had some German-made diphtheria serum available and the last of this serum was used on these cases. Five cases occurred in 1946, and no serum was available. After this time, Soviet serum became available and was apparently effective in treatment of other diphtheria cases which occurred.

13. Red Army troops were used to guard the PWs and the mining installations.

14. Japanese PWs were in neighboring camps. It was rumored that the Soviets had used these Japanese as mine workers but the incidence of tuberculosis and mortality rate were so high among these men that the Soviets decided to use them only for open air work, e.g., road repair and building construction.

25X1 15. [redacted] a single incident of food poisoning allegedly from spoiled sauerkraut. It had been obtained from a nearby collective farm, and was packed in a cask sealed with tar. Ten men were seriously ill, and many others were sick. [redacted] no canned foods were ever received by the camp from Soviet sources. Dried or salted fish was a dietary staple, with bread and soup. 25X1